

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A method for controlling access to a functional unit within a set top box, comprising:  
receiving first information comprising a plurality of functional unit identifiers and one or more tier requirements respectively related to each functional unit identifier;  
receiving second information comprising tier rights;  
correlating the functional unit identifiers to their respective tier requirements;  
interacting with the functional unit;  
determining if the respective tier requirements are satisfied by the tier rights; and  
authorizing further interaction with the functional unit.

2. The method for controlling access to the functional unit within the set top box of claim 1, further comprising receiving third information that replaces the tier rights.

3. The method for controlling access to the functional unit within the set top box of claim 1, wherein more than one of the tier rights could authorize further interaction with the functional unit identifier.

4. The method for controlling access to the functional unit within the set top box of claim 1, authenticating a source of at least one of the first and second information.

5. The method for controlling access to the functional unit within the set top box of claim 1, wherein the functional unit comprises a discrete entity comprising at least one of software, hardware, drivers, firmware, data, video, and audio.

6. The method for controlling access to the functional unit within the set top box of claim 1, further comprising receiving a plurality of streaming content functional units.

1                   7.       The method for controlling access to the functional unit within the  
2 set top box of claim 1, wherein the set top box is integral with an enclosure for a display.

1                   8.       A conditional access system for controlling access to functional  
2 units, comprising:  
3                   a set top box;  
4                   a functional unit associated with the set top box;  
5                   a requirements message comprising a functional unit identifier and one or  
6 more tier requirements related to the functional unit identifier, wherein the functional unit  
7 identifier is associated with the functional unit;  
8                   a rights message comprising one or more tier rights; and  
9                   an authorization function that compares each of the one or more tier  
10 requirements against the one or more tier rights in order to authorize use of the functional  
11 unit.

1                   9.       The conditional access system for controlling access to functional  
2 units of claim 8, further comprising an authentication function that authenticates a source  
3 of the rights and requirements messages.

1                   10.      The conditional access system for controlling access to functional  
2 units of claim 8, further comprising a data channel between a headend and the set top box,  
3 wherein the data channel is one of bi-directional and omni-directional.

1                   11.      The conditional access system for controlling access to functional  
2 units of claim 8, further comprising a second rights message to replace the tier rights.

1                   12.      The conditional access system for controlling access to functional  
2 units of claim 8, further comprising a plurality of streaming content functional units sent  
3 from a headend to the set top box.

1                   13.      The conditional access system for controlling access to functional  
2 units of claim 8, wherein the functional unit comprises a discrete entity comprising at  
3 least one of software, hardware, drivers, firmware, data, video, and audio.

1                   14.      The conditional access system for controlling access to functional  
2 units of claim 8, wherein the set top box is integral to an enclosure for a display.

1           15.     A method for controlling access to remotely-located and functional  
2 units within a conditional access system, comprising:  
3           determining first and second information to modify authorization of a  
4 remotely-located and functional unit;  
5           sending the first information comprising a functional unit identifier and at  
6 least one tier requirement related to the functional unit identifier;  
7           sending the second information comprising a tier right; and  
8           causing modification of an authorization state of the remotely located  
9 functional unit corresponding to the functional unit identifier.

1           16.     The method for controlling access to remotely-located and  
2 functional units within the conditional access system of claim 15, further comprising:  
3           sending third information comprising a replacement tier right; and  
4           causing further modification of the authorization state of the remotely-  
5 located and functional unit corresponding to the functional unit identifier.

1           17.     The method for controlling access to remotely-located and  
2 functional units within the conditional access system of claim 15, wherein the  
3 authorization state is one of authorized and unauthorized.

1           18.     The method for controlling access to remotely-located and  
2 functional units within the conditional access system of claim 15, further comprising  
3 generating a signature over at least one of the first and second information.

1           19.     The method for controlling access to remotely-located and  
2 functional units within the conditional access system of claim 15, wherein more than one  
3 tier right could authorize use of the remotely-located and functional unit corresponding to  
4 the functional unit identifier.

1           20.     The method for controlling access to remotely-located and  
2 functional units within the conditional access system of claim 15, further comprising  
3 sending a plurality of streaming content functional units to a remote location.

1           21.     The method for controlling access to remotely-located and  
2 functional units within the conditional access system of claim 15, wherein the remotely-

- 3 located and functional unit comprises a discrete entity comprising at least one of software,
- 4 hardware, drivers, firmware, data, video, and audio.